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ABSTRACT

The rationale for teaching short fiction to high intermediate and advanced English as a second language (ESL) students is discussed. The main use of short fiction in the ESL or bilingual class is as a decoding tool. Any reading function is peripheral. Short fiction, including non-fiction narratives, can provide a supplement to the regular curriculum. Its use fulfills the student goals of self-correction and self-mastery of advanced points, organization of supporting materials, vocabulary expertise, deeper immersion into and understanding of cultural givens embedded in the target language, and development of the student's voice. The teacher's task is to arrange for the students themselves to see into the fiction and to enable the students to transfer understanding gleaned from the stories to their work in the target areas. Studying fiction offers the collateral benefit of providing an opportunity for students to express feelings in English. For someone developing English language skills, it is a safe experiment and a healthy outlet. (RW)

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Short, Sweet, and Sticky

Short Fiction for ESOL Instruction

by

Howard Sage

Abstract

While most ESL instructors and texts use essays to demonstrate and reinforce language skills taught, teaching short fiction can achieve the same purposes with equal speed, efficiency, intensity, and enjoyment. The careful reading of short stories (and occasionally short novels) in itself reinforces essential structural and grammatical points (for example, pronouns, verb tenses) as well as principles of expository writing (order, selection of details, others). It also suggests useful lively classroom activities (role playing, student orginal story telling). Finally, well chosen stories introduce students to an unfamiliar culture more vividly and more concretely than do other genres.

The essay will suggest a rationale for teaching short fiction to high intermediate and advanced ESL students. Using examples from stories, it illustrates some representative specific classroom uses of short fiction, naming five major uses of short fiction for the ESL classroom.

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Howard Sage

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As professionals interested in mediums and messages, we are familiar with the concept, if not the words, stated by Joseph Conrad in his novel, The Rescue, that "There is no rest for a messenger 'till the message is delivered" (Conrad 1906 : 9). This lopsided emphasis on message has recently been questioned by the contemporary short story writer and novelist, Issac Bashevis Singer, who, in a recent speech, remarked, "Writers are so interested in messages they've forgotten how to tell a story" (Singer, 1982:5). As instructors, our parallel concern has been that we have forgotten or have perhaps never known how to enjoy a narrative itself. If we can learn, or re-learn, to enjoy narrative for itself, we will have come a long way toward the second step. That is, of course, to grasp for ourselves and then teach to our English as a Second Language students the story's message or messages or, to establish a more accurate term, themes, in the broadest possible context. At the same time, we will become more successful at conveying to them the other narrative aspects, character, structure, and the like, which contribute to theme.

In this essay I suggest ways to allow short fiction in and of itself to convey selected, essential native speaker language skills to our non-native speakers. Second, I also hope to suggest ways to draw from the narrative ideas and inspiration for related lively classroom activities, again

with the goals of pleasure and acquisition of functional language skills. In both processes we are called upon not to "teach " but to act as mediums through which the narratives work, in short, to facilitate.

The broad outlines of this essay are as follows. First, I do not conceive of the main use of short fiction in the ESL or bilingual classroom primarily as a reading tool. Exposition, essays of all sorts, serve very well both to teach and to allow students to practice decoding. Any reading function of short fiction in the ESL classroom I consider peripheral, certainly not its best use. A second assumption: I am using short fiction not only to mean conventional short stories but to include non-fiction narratives. The two modes often overlap and can frequently serve the same function for the ESL instructor. Finally, I am not proposing an entire advanced ESL course composed exclusively of short fiction, although without doubt such a course could with integrity and usefulness be organized around short fiction. Rather, I assume and suggest here for high intermediate and advanced English as a Second Language classes a substantial unit or substantial units of short fiction.

The uses of short fiction are, fortunately, too numerous and too varied for any one writer to claim s/he has discovered and can elucidate all of them. What I will do,however, is to suggest what I consider to be five of the most useful language goals to which short fiction lends itself in the ESL classroom.

They are (1) student self-correction and self-mastery of advanced grammatical points; (2) organization of supporting materials, especially in writing; (3) vocabulary expertise; (4) deeper immersion into and understanding of cultural givens embedded in the target language and the willingness to question the relationship of these to those in one's own native language and culture; and (5) development of the student's "voice," especially in writing. Before dealing with these points in some detail, let me briefly explain each.

By the time the student arrives at the high intermediate or advanced level ESL courses, s/he has mastered many of the essential grammatical structures and functions in English. What often lags behind are such matters as formulating more sophisticated and structurally more complex questions; being able to combine a variety of sentence structures on a more advanced level; and controlling tenses and time continuity. These are the grammatical areas to which the study of fiction can most contribute.

Organization of material to support expository or argumentative points is a second major concern of high intermediate and advanced ESL classes. Here, too, the study of short fiction can aid students' awareness of audience, selection of details, patterns available for development, and other such matters. All these can emerge from keen analyses of short fiction. Vocabulary growth, the third area which I consider can greatly benefit from short fiction study, is perhaps

the most evident. Fiction employs a rich mixture and variation of levels of diction. Such usage has direct benefits for non-native students' a/o/r/ and w work. Still another area concerns the students' ability to ask questions about the target culture. Frequently, even advanced students find it difficult to muster enough language resources or to integrate them sufficiently to ask questions about the society in which they are residing and whose language they are learning. Fiction, through its subject matter, goes halfway in this process toward the student, acting as a catalyst for the student to begin to question on her/his own. The fifth and, in my opinion, the most useful purpose of short fiction in the ESL curriculum is to aid in developing the student's own voice. The authors and narrators of stories arrange themselves into an infinitely long caravan of voices, ironic, sensitive, alluring, and so on. What better way is there for the high intermediate or advanced ESL student to sort out his/her voice in English than by listening to them? Such authentic voices far surpass in this area the use of dialogues, which, as Lazburg and Hilfarty (1979:49) notice, are "frequently contextualized minimally or not at all proportionate to their relative importance to the total syllabus." The human voice in short fiction is, on the contrary, always contextualized.

How, then, can short fiction aid in each of these areas? Moreover, what is the facilitator's role in the process? What is the instructor to do?

The answer appears deceptively simple. The facilitator's tasks are two: primarily, to arrange for the students themselves to see into the fiction and point out what the student doesn't see. As A. Marquardt (1978), paraphrased in McConochie(1981) asserts, " ... by far the most effective way to help students learn the cultural values underlying the English language is to arrange for them to discover those values for themselves, with literature being a convenient medium for the discovery." The literature, I further suggest, the stories themselves, in consultation with the instructor, will usually lead students to transfer understanding gleaned from the stories to their own work in all the areas mentioned above: (1)grammar, (2) organization, (3) vocabulary, (4) cultural questioning, and (5) voice. The power of the stories, then, which I will now selectively illustrate in each area, is probably exclusively catalytic, sufficient in itself to set off language acquisition.

At the advanced ESL level we introduce little if any grammar never before known to the student. We review the old and attempt to have the students apply it to more advanced tasks in speaking, listening, and especially, in reading and writing. We also interface grammatical units previously kept separate. In short, the advanced ESL curriculum seeks to fuse and integrate previously distinct grammatical elements as well as to firm up the newly integrated skills.

If, as I suggest, this is the goal and the practice, then short fiction stands as the optimum medium through which to accomplish both, for it offers the widest and most easily available choice of advanced grammatical structures in use. Most short story writers, as part of their craft, employ advanced (for ESL students) grammatical structures. The teacher's task, as collaborator with and medium for the writer, is, as always, to select, organize, and focus upon the grammatical structures to be emphasized in a particular story.

I note four essential grammatical areas crucial to the high intermediate and advanced ESL class. They are (1) the formulation of more sophisticated questions; (2) the ability to use and recognize more sophisticated sentences and combinations of sentences; (3) control of tense and time continuity; and (4) generally more flexibility than previously in the use of all grammar structures. These are the areas we wish students to control at this point, the grammatical muscles we wish them to flex.

The student must gain the ability to formulate questions on an advanced, even sophisticated plane in the advanced ESL classroom. Short fiction can do what we, the instructors, did for the student in his or her early second language learning: model the structures. What particular stories will

best demonstrate each structure? Many stories, of course, will, but let me suggest and illustrate a few. In a fine story by Katherine Anne Porter, "Rope," a couple setting up their vacation home for the season, are having a dispute about the purchase of supplies. The man had gone into town, a good walk we are told, only to come back without the essential item his mate craved: coffee. Instead, apparently irrationally to her way of thinking, he has purchased a huge coil of rope for household use, which she didn't ask for, seems to have enough of, and for which, she says, there is no apparent use. Porter (Perrine 1974: 454) reports the essence of their dispute through rhetorical questions:

> But she was a little disappointed about the coffee, and oh, look, look, look at the eggs! Oh, my, they're all running! What had he put on top of them? Hadn't he known eggs mustn't be squeezed? Squeezed, who had squeezed them, he wanted to know.

The questions continue:

> The question was, when both of them were work- on their own time, was their going to be a division of the housework, or wasn't there? She merely wanted to know, she had to make her plans. Why, he thought that was all arranged. It was understood that he was to help. Hadn't he always, in summer? (Perrine 1974:457).

The story moves toward a conclusion but not before more questions:

> Well, what to do now? He would take back the rope and exchange it for something else. . . . He'd take it back. Hell, why should he? He wanted it. What was it anyhow? A piece of rope? Imagine anybody caring more about a piece of rope than about a man's feelings. What earthly right had she to say a word about it? He remembered all the useless, meaningless things she bought for herself. Why? because I wanted it, that's why! (Perrine 1974: 458).

The story finally concludes, of course, with a question:

> He was a love, she firmly believed, and if she had had her coffee in the morning, she wouldn't have behaved so funny. . . .There was a whippoorwill still coming back, imagine, clear out of season, sitting in the crab-apple tree calling all by himself. Maybe his girl stood him up. Maybe she did. She hoped to hear him once more, she loved whippoorwills. . . . He knew how she was, didn't he?
>
> Sure, he knew how she was (Perrine 1974:458).

Of course, in addition to the questions and the variety of sentences, the uses to which they are put, and the tones they

convey, in themselves an education for the non-native speaker, the punctuation, the abbreviated tense forms, the word order, and the use of the passive voice are additional learning benefits,which at this level may be understood without explicit reference.

While questions are without doubt important for the student, the student's ability to craft sentences needs its final touches and a great deal of practice. Both can be realized while reading short fiction. Faulkner's sentences in his short stories, like the following from "The Bear," cry out for student attention. The story tells of the boy's search for a bear, which, in the typical Faulknerian manner, is much more than a physical bear. The paragraph I cite below contains three sentences of ten, seventy-two, and one hundred and forty-three words respectively, worthy content for a focused part of a lesson:

> It ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it. It looked and towered in his dreams before he even saw the unaxed woods where it left its crooked print, shaggy, huge, red-eyed, not malovelent, but just big--too big for the dogs which tried to bay it, for the horses which tried to ride it down, for the men and the bullets they fired into it, too big for the very country which was its constricting scope. He seemed to see it

> entire with a child's complete divination before he ever laid eyes on either--the doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with axes and plows who feared it because it was wilderness, men myriad and nameless even to one another in the land where the old bear had earned a name, through which ran not even a mortal animal but an anachronism, indomitable and invincible, out of an old dead time, a phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old wild life at which the puny humans swarmed and hacked in a fury of abhorrence and fear, like pygmies about the ankles of a drowsing elephant: the old bear solitary, indomitable and alone--widowered, childless, and absolved of mortality--old Priam reft of his old wife and having outlived all his sons (Berman and Burto, 1967:57).

These three sentences, separated from the whole and studied, offer an opportunity for students and teachers both to marvel at and study together the relative clauses, the parallel expressions, and the parenthetical expressions which carry some of the syntactical weight.

At the advanced ESL level we take it as our responsibility to take the final steps with the student toward control of tense, mood, and,especially, time sequencing. More than drill and memory are required at this stage, if, in fact, they are ever sufficient in themselves. What is needed is awareness of time in English, in short, time training. Such training is not particularly convenient to arrange while reading exposition, which does not usually shift tense and mood as frequently as does fiction. The Porter short story, as we have seen, carries off some quite sophisticated time shifts. Similarly, a late nineteenth century American story,"The Revolt of Mother," by a New Englander, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, shifts tense, mood, and time in a way advanced ESL students need to understand and to accomplish in their own writing. The story depicts the plight of a nineteenth century woman in rebellion against her husband, who seems to be providing better for the animals on their farm, building them a new barn while leaving the family in the old, crumbling house. While the husband is away to buy a new horse, Sarah, to point up the contrast, moves her family into the barn:

> Every builder builds somewhat for unknown purposes, and is in a measure a prophet. The architect of Adoniram Penn's barn, while he designed it for the comfort of four-footed animals, had planned better than he knew for

the comfort of humans. Sarah Penn saw at a glance its possibilities. Those great box-stalls, with quilts hung before them, would make better bedrooms than the one she had occupied for forty years, and there was a tight carriage-room. The harness-room, with its chimney and shelves, would make a kitchen of her drams. The great middle space would make a parlor by-and-by, fit for a palace. Upstairs there was as much room as down. With partitions and windows, what a house there would be! Sarah looked at the row of stanchions before the alloted space for cows and reflected that she would have her front entry there (Cassill 1981:545).

Freeman's manipulation of tense and time is both central to what these high intermediate and advanced students need to know about and conducive to their learning it. In all the examples above, of course, as well as in many other stories, the best way to make the goal accessible to students is to isolate a passage or two, like those I have read, and ask students individually or in pairs to explain it, including their personal reactions to it, to the class. The same can be done with individual sentences and words distributed to each student in pairs or in any other combination, either for homework or as an in-class task.

At the high intermediate and, especially, at the advanced ESL level,we seek to firm up the non-native student's ability to organize his or her ideas in writing. Here we aim to complete her or his control over central and supporting ideas, selection of details, and sequence. We hope to instill an even greater awareness of audience and of the patterns available in English to develop an idea and their relative suitability for diverse subjects. If ordering and linking parcels of thought is, as most language and thinking tasks, culturally relative, then the options available in English will be, to one degree or another, unfamiliar to the student. S/he will need exposure to, even immersion into, these options, and, once again, short fiction can help with the task.

Short fiction writers, like all writers, stake out their time and space and carefully place events in both. They spread actions and incidents across their frame in various unique ways. A superb example, which I heartily recommend for use in class, is Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat," a short story based, incidentally, on an actual occurrence experienced by Crane and written by him as a news story also. The story depicts the attempt by four men in a dinghy to make it to shore after their larger home vessel has capsized. Other than the central necessity of

having the men keep rowing in the direction they suppose is shore, Crane was free to stretch his events across the time/place canvas in whatever way he wished. In fact, the space could hardly be wider, the sea, and the structure, the arrangement of the men's thoughts. The story is divided into seven parts, which match the progress of the boat and the stages of the men's thoughts. A few examples of these stages will make the pattern explicit. I cite the first and last few sentences of each section. Part I:

> None of them knew the color of the sky. Their eyes glanced level and were fastened upon the waves that swept toward them (Cassill 1981:357).

The end of Part I:

> 'Well,' said the cook, 'perhaps it's not a house of refuge that I'm thinking of as being near Mosquito Inlet Light; perhaps it's a lifesaving station" (Cassill 1981:357).

Now the start of Part IV:

> 'Cook,' remarked the captain,'there don't seem to be any signs of life about your house of refuge.'
>
> 'No,' replies the cook. 'Funny they don't see us!' (Cassill 1981: 363).

Notice the movement to the end of Part IV:

> The cook's head was on a thwart, and he looked without interest at the water under his nose. He was deep in other scenes. Finally, he spoke. 'Billie,' he murmured, dreamfully, 'what kind of pie do you like best?' (Cassill 1981:367-368).

The start of Part VI:

> 'If I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees?' (Cassill 1981:370).

And the beginning and end of Part VII:

> When the correspondent again opened his eyes, the sea and the sky were each of the gray hue of the dawning. . . .
>
> On the distant dunes were set many little black cottages, and a tall white windmill reared above them. No man, nor dog, nor bicycle appeared on the beach (Cassill 1981: 372).

But at the close of Part VII:

> It seems that instantly the beach was populated with men with blankets, clothes and flasks, and women with coffee-pots and all the remedies sacred to their minds. The welcome of

> the land to the men from the sea was warm and generous; but a still and dripping shape was carried slowly up the beach, and the land's welcome for it could only be the different and sinister hospitality of the grave.
>
> When it came night, the white waves paced to and fro in the moonlight, and the wind brought the sound of the great sea's voice to the men on the shore, and they felt that they could then be interpreters (Cassill 1981: 376).

If students are asked to do simply what I have done, excerpt and then compare the stages of the author's arrangement of thought and plot, a valuable lesson emerges. Students will observe how thought is augmented in carefully chosen and arranged steps. Whether the journey be by sea, as in "The Open Boat"; by train, as in John Cheever's "Five-Forty Eight;" on the edge of a noose, as in Ambrose Bierce's "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," the lesson remains. Additionally, students can be asked to rearrange the incidents, thus providing an opportunity to notice and discuss cultural differences that emerge in so doing; to diagram the arrangement; and, if they are graphically inclined, to attach drawings or photos to each stage. As always, the possibilities are nearly endless.

Perhaps the most obvious and most easily explained of the uses I find for short fiction in ESL classes is the third, the opportunity it affords for students to increase their vocabulary and their appreciation of words. The Anglo-Saxon writers called their habitual vocabulary their word-hoard, but modern short fiction writers don't hoard their language at all. The rich array of idiom, sounds, and sensory evocations found in modern short fiction is a sweet and pleasing blend students can savor. Further, it is again in context, fixed in place, time, and person, and, furthermore, compressed in a short narrative. Thus, it is easily recalled by the student. One of the best examples is found in the first two paragraphs of Eudora Welty's story "Powerhouse," the account of a lonely blues musician as he wanders from gig to gig throughout the South. She begins:

> Powerhouse is playing!
>
> He's here on tour from the city--'Powerhouse and His Keyboard'--'Powerhouse and His Tasmanians'--think of the things he calls himself! There's no one in the world like him. You can't tell what he is. 'Nigger man'? he looks more Asiatic, monkey, Jewish, Babylonian, Peruvian, fanatic, devil. He has pale,gray

> eyes, heavy lids, maybe horny like a lizard's,
> but big glowing eyes when they're open together
> on each side of the pedals. He's not coal black--
> beverage colored--looks like a preacher when his
> mouth is shut, but then it opens--vast and
> obscene. And his mouth is going every minute;
> like a monkey's when it looks for something. Im-
> provising, coming on a light and childish melody--
> smooch--he loves it with his mouth (Cassill 1981: 1428).

Equally metaphorical are the words from any of James Joyce's stories, but especially available for the students is "Araby," from Joyce's Dubliners. The adolescent narrator imagines he is in love with a girl on his street and, carried away, says,

> My eyes were often full of tears (I could
> not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart
> seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought
> little of the future. I did not know whether I would
> ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her,
> how I could tell her of my confused adoration.
> But my body was like a harp and her words and
> gestures were like fingers running upon the wires (Cassill 1981:691)

Again, the method here is to involve the students, individually or in pairs, with individual words, asking them to pronounce, explain, react to, replace, in short, to mix it up with the story's vocabulary. And, again, as in the grammar and organizational areas, divide and conquer the story. Focus on the specific area being considered, have each student make part of it his or her domain, and through the focus, work the class's way back to the entire story.

It is all too easy, as we know, to overemphasize narrow linguistic results in the ESL classroom and downplay the more ample cultural benefits of the classroom experience. With W. Marquardt (1968:8) we can probably all agree that "Knowledge of the deep structures of the target language and of the underlying values, assumptions, beliefs, and intergroup attitudes of its culture are now seen to be as important in the real mastery of a language as a facile use of the patterns of everyday speech." I further agree that "... the study of the literature of the language is felt to be the surest way to attain these more elusive qualities that go to make up a total mastery of the language." What I and Marquardt are speaking about, then, is the fourth use of short fiction, namely, to encourage the student to immerse himself/herself in, understand, and question cultural assumptions in the target language.

Short fiction encourages this process more vividly and more concretly than do other genres. By expanding the student's world of thought and subject matter, by temporarily obscuring the line between fact and fiction, by engaging the student in a situation not in his own experience and often not precisely available in his or her own culture, it stimulates the student questioning of assumptions is his or her native culture and in the target culture. It allows the student to ask and supports him or her in the asking of the question:"Who am I in this culture?" If it is successful in so doing, it deepens the student's cultural confusion, a necessary first step in order to emerge whole later.[1]

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[1] Marshall 1979:331 reminds us of one drawback to watch for: cross-cultural barriers which we may need to overcome before and during the teaching of any literature. She remarks: "The challenge of this particular cross-cultural teaching heightens the instructor's awareness of these barriers of time and culture across which all literature functions."

The stories that are able to accomplish this are extraordinary stories. There are, for example, Sherwood Anderson's "I Want to Know Why," Ring Lardner's "Haircut," Katherine Anne Porter's "Maria Concepcion," Joyce (again),

"The Boarding House," John Updike's " A&P," and Cynthia Rich's "My Sister's Marriage." The one I wish to excerpt from here, however, is a classic story of the conflict war brings, Frank O'Connor's "Guests of the Nation." In this story, experienced and told by a young narrator, two soldiers are forced to execute two prisoners with whom they have lived for some time and with whom they have developed a close friendship. The friendship, of course, has been reciprocal, and no one, not those forced to murder in retaliation for a killing of two of their own who are prisoners nor those about to be murdered, can believe the murders will occur. So far has the friendship advanced that the British soldiers, about to die, declare their comradeship with the Irish more important than loyalty to their own cause:

> 'Listen to me, Noble,' he says.'You and me are chums. You can't come over to my side, so I'll come over to your side. That show you I mean what I say? Give me a rifle and I'll go along with you and the other lads!
>
> Nobody answered him. We knew that was no way out. (Berman and Burto 1967:47).

The executions take place,and the young narrator remains to confess his feelings to the reader:

> Then, by God, in the very doorway, she /an old lady who had known the dead soldiers and had heard the shots/ fell on her knees and began praying, and after looking at her for a minute or two Noble did the same by the fireplace. I pushed my way out past her and left them at it. I stood at the door, watching the stars and listening to the shrieking of the birds dying out over the bogs. It is so strange what you feel at times like that you can't describe it. Noble says he saw everything ten times the size, as though there were nothing in the whole world but that little patch of bog with the two Englishmen stifferning into it,but with me it was as if the patch of bog where the Englishmen were was a million miles away, and even Noble and the old woman, mumbling behind me, and the birds and the bloody stars were all far away, and I was somehow very small and very lost and lonely like a child astray in the snow. And anything that happened me afterwards, I never felt the same about again. (Berman and Burto 1967:50).

The story then raises significant questions concerning the relative value of love for individuals as opposed to the love of country and does so from the point of view of an impressionable young person. Such questions can give rise to

many discussions and debates. Moreover, students could be asked to change the ending of the story and to discuss the changes or to transplant the story to their own countries and envision the changes or lack of changes that would result. The possible follow-ups to the reading of such a story are limited only by the students' and teachers' imagination and courage in confronting their own cultural biases.

The fifth, final, and, in my opinion, most significant benefit of using short fiction in the ESL classroom is to develop the student's own voice in the target language. By the student's voice, I mean his a/o/w abilities in the broadest sense: hearing, recognizing, anticipating, and appreciating intonation; becoming both familiar and comfortable with the whole range of intonational possibilities; learning to infer intonation and make assumptions from it about speakers; recognition of what linguistic situation one finds onself in; and awareness of one's own voice in English. The short story writer, of course, specializes in and has always known and understood the full range of verbal and non-verbal "voices."

What is "voice" in fiction? Pickering and Hoeper (1982: 64) explain what the writer is about when s/he evokes his or her own or a character's voice:

> From early childhood on we learn to identify and respond to these elements of speech in a

> speaker's voice. For example, a mother can tell her child to 'Come here!" in a manner that is angry, threatening, concerned, amused, sympathetic, or affectionate simply by altering her tone of voice. In each case, the mother's meaning is the same--she wants her child to come. However, the relationship she creates with her auditor (the child) will differ dramatically according to her tone. . . .The particular qualities of a speaking voice are unavailable to a writer in creating tone, but to a certain extent rhythm and punctuation can substitute for a speaker's accent and inflection, while word order and word choice can influence tone as easily in prose as in speech.

However, it is also important to recall, with Clayton (1977: 21) that "Often the narrator is simply a voice--a voice the author releases out of his or her bag of voices." No one claims that these voices are equivalent to authentic human speech. Fiction, however, does display perhaps the most authentic collection of voices available outside of actual speech and often has both more variety and more vitality than actual speech itself. The student certainly can not hope to

walk all American cities and suburbs or paths through woods and to farms to hear a cross-section of American voices. Fiction, however, can offer a modest substitute for the rich listening inherent in such a walk and, so, provide a model from which the student can develop his or her own voice in English.

The student interested in listening to fictional voices will find many models among short story writers. Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," William Carlos Williams' "The Use of Force," Katherine Anne Porter's "Rope" once again, "Truman Capote's "My Side of the Matter," and the story I will mention here, which emerges well even in translation, the classic DeMaupassant story, "The Necklace." DeMaupassant manipulates the voice in the story to make the ending stronger, an ending in which, after ten years of hard labor, a woman who borrowed and lost a necklace, discovers from the woman who lent it to her, that the necklace was not a valuable one and that her ten years work to repay the debt was wasted and meaningless. He describes the meeting between the two women after ten years:

> Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households--strong and hard and rough, With frowsy hair, skirts askew, and red hands, she talked loud while washing the floor with great swishes of water (Cassill 1981: 989).

He then quickly shifts and puts us in the voice and mind of Mme. Loisel herself, drawing on our sympathy:

> What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? Who knows? How life is strange and changeful! How little a thing is needed for us to be lost or to be saved! (Cassill 1981: 989).

She comes directly upon Mme. Forestier, "still young, still beautiful, still charming":

> Mme. Loisel felt moved. Was she going to speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she was going to tell her all about it. Why not? (Cassill 1981:989).

The voice is now that of the nervous, anxious, beside-herself person who, after ten years, meets the person reponsible for her predicament. At this moment, having established all the voice necessary, DeMaupassant turns to and concludes with the most damning, tragic voice: dialogue--the voices of the two women themselves:

> 'You say that you bought a necklace of diamons to to replace mine?'
>
> 'Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very like.'
>
> And she smiled with a joy which was proud and naive at once.
>
> Mme. Forestier, strongly moved, took her two hands.

'Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste. It was worth at most five hundred francs!' (Cassill 1981:990).

The shifts in voice are precise, unmistakable, and clear to a student, even a non-native, reader.

There are many methods the facilitator can use to insure carry over from the student's recggnition of the fictional voices to development of his or her own. Reading aloud of short passages of the story will surely help. Acting out of short scenes, such as the final scene I just described, will face students with the necessity of convenying the correct voice. Ask students to collect on casette examples of distinct voices they hear--at home, in supermarkets, on television and radio. Let them interview people, collect oral histories. Of course, they can attempt to portray voi[redacted] through other mediums--matching facial expressio[redacted] a particular voice. This most interesting and most significant of ways in which short fiction makes itself accessible to second language study is, like the others, fully open to student and facilitator intenuity.

Having invited Messrs. Demaupassant, Joyce, and FAulkner, and Madames and Mademoisseles Porter, Freeman, and Welty into our English as a Second Language classrooms, what can we cnclude about their appearances?

One thing is certain: there are many fine short fiction writers who deserve the invitation. Yes, there are some stories--not writers--to avoid. Essentially the ones to scrutinize carefully are those that are overly long or that require some special technical knowledge such as related to a particular profession or a particular locality (Sherwood Anderson's stories of horses and jockeys in Kentucky come to mind). They often carry a forbidding vocabulary which denies easy access to the student. Second, don't use the abridged stories so often available from ESL publishers. Selections are fine; abridgements are distortions sometimes patched together by non-writers in the interest of popularity or financial gain and rarely do justice to the original. Do learn as much as you can about the history and interpretation of short stories. Do also encourage your students, with your guidance, to do exercises involving rewriting of sections of stories and to compare the original with the revisions. Encourage those who wish to to write their own stories. Allow students to bring in photographs or drawings that they feel convey the flaver of the stories and in some cases enhance the narrative.

The benefits for the ESL facilitator and for the ESL student of teaching and studying short fiction are many. Short fiction provides an opportunity for and the

value of getting outside ourselves at the same time that it enables us to recognize ourselves in the story. The foreign and the familiar are both present for us and for our students in short fiction. The extent to which we feel one or the other or both in any given story is happily unpredictable. An instructor teaching a literature class asked the students at the end of the course to name their favorite stories from the text. Eight Jewish students in the class, the majority mostly males from New York or New Jersey, replied that they preferred James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues." The one black woman in the class preferred Stanley Elkin's story of Chicago Jews, "Criers and Kibitzers." When asked why, she said, "Well, I am from Chicago, you know" (Bain, Beaty, Hunter 1977:16). We come to fiction, to paraphrase D. H. Lawrence, out of context, to get away from ourselves. We come to it also to find ourselves again.

Another related benefit of short fiction in the ESL classroom is the opportunity for catharsis it offers. This opportunity, of course, is nothing new in literature. It allows students to express themselves in a safe way in English--through the literature. They can speak about Powerhouse and Mrs. Penn and say what they wish. If you agree with Gary Gabriel's remarks made at the October, 1982 NYS ESOL BEA conference, that students' non-verbal language

often indicates an extreme but suppressed anger, then the instructor must help the student discover a route to catharsis. Unhappy, as Gabriel suggests these students are, they hang back and retain the anger because they prefer to remain in the safe area of objectivity. If, again with Gabriel, we see our role as that of equipping our students, who have lived a lifetime filled with experiences we will never have, to sample more of life, then this very sampling can also be a catharsis. Studying fiction, then, I suggest, has supreme benefits,for students can express feelings in English, certainly about themselves, but about and through a character, an author's creation. For someone growing in English language skills it's a safe experiment and a healthy outlet.

A third benefit of reading and studying short fiction for ourstydents is the bridge such study builds to language use in general. Grammar,vocabulary, and ability to organize are only the more essential language benefits students gain. Development of their own voices is another. Of course, the many language benefits that may accrue to students through their study of short fiction are not, finally, completely known either to us or to them. There are evidences, of course--the students' responses, their improvement, their ability to extend their language to new and different situations,but, finally, as facilitators we must trust the value of the materials, in this case, the short fiction we bring to our students.

Most important, the study of short fiction in the ESL classroom is truly functional. That is, without suffering distortion or reduction , a piece of short fiction does effectively, but not solely, convey a message. As Steven Krashen, also a plenary speaker at the 1982 NYSESOLBEA Albany conference indicated, we acquire language when we understand messages, when messages are comprehensible.[2]

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[2] Our previous point about grammar will be nurtured also, for, as Krashen says, comprehensible messages contain the necessary structures.

A comprehensible message--here Krashen reaffirms Gabriel--keeps the student's anxiety level low, self-esteem high. In this context, with the teacher/facilitator's aid, language acquisition can and will take place. A good piece of fiction, I affirm, has both elements: a clear message and, because it is fiction and not real life, the power to keep the student's affective filter low. If Krashen is correct in saying that the role of the classroom is intermediate, that is, it makes a student intermediate, allowing the world to take over the language teaching, then short fiction is the perfect intermediary for ESL classroom use.

With sustained, sensitive exposure of students to the varied world of fiction, with open, equally sensitive facilitators allowing the fiction to come forth and encouraging the students to meet it halfway, as the need arises, we can all hope, with the courageous inhabitants of Crane's "Open Boat," also to be interpreters.

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PLEASE INSERT ABOVE BETWEEN HILFARTY AND KRASHEN THE FOLLOWING:

Hoeper ,Jeffrey D,and James H. Pickering. 1982. Literature. New York:Macmillan.

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